

Twelfth Issue: December 2024

Equity and Inclusion: Why Values-Driven Change Matters

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(She/Her)

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In recent years, there has been growing debate around initiatives aimed at fostering more inclusive and equitable workplaces. Some critics view these efforts as unnecessary or even counterproductive to business goals. At Winning Inclusive Solutions (WINS), we understand these concerns, but our experience shows that a commitment to both equity and inclusion is not just a moral imperative—it's a practical one.

Recent analysis by the independent group Tribunal Watch Ontario highlights a troubling trend. Their findings reveal that Ontario's Human Rights System is becoming an increasingly inaccessible avenue for those seeking redress for alleged discrimination.^[1] According to the latest statistics from the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO), 93% of cases are dismissed without a hearing, many after years of delay, with applicants often facing burdensome requirements that ultimately result in their claims being abandoned.

These statistics underscore a critical point: the responsibility to foster inclusion, equity, and fairness in our workplaces and communities falls on all of us. We must create a culture where individuals are self-regulating and self-aware, mindful of the potential biases in their actions, and actively committed to fostering environments where all can thrive.

Equity and Inclusion: A Smart and Necessary Strategy

For businesses, fostering an equitable and inclusive environment isn't just about doing the right thing—it's about building a more innovative and resilient organization. Research consistently shows that diverse teams are better at problem-solving, more adaptable, and more capable of serving a wide array of clients and customers. Creating workplaces where everyone has equal access to opportunities, and where all voices are valued, enhances employee satisfaction, boosts retention, and drives overall business success.

Beyond the workplace, equity is essential for a just society. When we advocate for fairness and equal opportunities, we help create communities where everyone has a chance to contribute and succeed. This not only strengthens our social fabric but also reduces barriers that limit potential and create disparities.

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[1] Source: Tribunal Watch Ontario, November 2024, for full analysis visit: <https://tribunalwatch.ca/2024/the-human-rights-tribunal-of-ontario-access-to-justice-denied/>

WINS' Values: A Universal Approach to Fostering Equity and Inclusion

At WINS, we believe that our values not only guide our work but also serve as a framework that can benefit any organization or community. These values are grounded in principles that transcend the workplace, offering practical solutions to the challenges of discrimination and inequity we see in society. Here's how these values, when adopted universally, can make a tangible difference:

Collaboration and Co-Creation:

The power of working together in a collaborative environment cannot be overstated. When we open the door to include different voices and ideas, we create solutions that are richer and more representative of the world around us. This collaborative mindset is critical in tackling the inequities that persist in our systems. Whether in the workplace, community, or broader society, creating inclusive policies and practices is best achieved through co-creation—where everyone's perspective is valued.

Openness to Change:

Change is not always easy, but it is necessary for progress. Openness to change means being willing to confront our biases, challenge the status quo, and continuously seek better ways to address systemic issues. It's about being open to shifting our perspectives, refining our approaches, and embracing new ways of thinking to create more inclusive environments. The willingness to evolve and advocate for meaningful change is critical for addressing inequities, whether in the workplace or beyond.

World Focus:

Our vision extends beyond local or national contexts, recognizing that the challenges of equity and inclusion are global. By adopting a world-focused approach, we acknowledge that solutions to exclusion and discrimination are not limited to specific groups or regions. When we advocate for fairness and inclusivity on a broader scale, we create ripple effects that can inspire change worldwide.

Respectful Dialogue:

Respectful dialogue forms the foundation of all meaningful change. In our interactions with others, especially in situations of disagreement or misunderstanding, it is essential that we treat one another with dignity and consideration. The ability to engage in open, respectful dialogue about difficult topics such as discrimination, power imbalances, and exclusion is necessary for dismantling barriers. In everyday interactions showing respect can foster empathy and understanding across differences.

Acceptance and Humanness:

True inclusion requires that we accept the full humanity of every individual, with all their strengths and vulnerabilities. This value encourages us to not just recognize people's differences but to embrace them. In fostering environments where people are accepted for who they are, we create spaces where individuals are empowered to bring their authentic selves. Accepting others' humanness helps dismantle prejudices and assumptions that often underpin discriminatory behaviors.



WINS is Celebrating Six Years of Collective Impact

As we mark WINS' six-year anniversary, we celebrate the people behind our success. This edition's 'community voices' section highlights the dedication, passion, and commitment of the individuals who have supported our mission. These voices represent the heart of WINS—our collective effort to foster equity and inclusion. This edition is a tribute to everyone who has contributed to our journey, from volunteers to board members, whose work has been essential in driving positive change and creating awareness for inclusion and equity for all.

Community Voices

"As WINS celebrates its 6th anniversary, what inspires you most about our work in fostering inclusion and equity in the workforce, and why do you believe a human-centered approach is essential for creating lasting change?"



Aaron Luo, PhD –
WINS Researcher &
Project Leader
'Showcasing Diverse
Voices'

Equity in the workforce is essential, especially for newcomers like myself, who face unique challenges in the job market. As a recent immigrant to Canada, I have observed firsthand how employment barriers can limit opportunities for diverse groups of people. This experience has inspired me to join WINS' community research effort on identifying gaps and advocating for fair, inclusive hiring practices.

A human-centered approach is vital for lasting change because it goes beyond policies to address the real, often complex, challenges people face. This approach allows us to consider each individual's unique experiences, skills, and potential, rather than reducing them to statistics. And this is the philosophy we hold for our work at WINS.

When employers actively listen to the stories and perspectives of employees, they can implement meaningful changes that foster equity and inclusion. Creating a truly inclusive environment requires empathy, understanding, and action, which is why I am passionate about continuing to advocate for this through our research and work. I am proud to be part of the WINS team and for the work that we've accomplished in the past few years.



Juan Olarte –
WINS Advisory Board
Member, &
Founder/CEO of
Digita11yAccessible

As WINS celebrates its 6th anniversary, I am deeply inspired by its commitment to fostering inclusion and equity in the workforce. In my work in digital accessibility, I've witnessed how **breaking barriers—whether in digital spaces or in workplaces—empowers people to reach their full potential.** A human-centered approach, like the one WINS embraces, is essential for creating lasting change because it focuses on individual experiences and needs, ensuring solutions are not just effective but also meaningful. By addressing barriers with empathy and understanding, we build environments where everyone can thrive and contribute, driving innovation and equity together.



Season's Greetings

As we step into the holiday season, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your continued support and commitment.

Spread joy and share the season's warmth with those you care about most.

In our effort to support diverse artists and promote dialogue on neurodiversity, we are collaborating with Aiden Lee, an abstract painter who has generously donated his digital art pieces to WINS Canada for our holiday campaign. Aiden believes that community is all about acceptance and kindness. Born with Autism, ADHD and anxiety, Aiden found a way of expressing himself through his art. He uses different textures that speak of the mind, body, and soul as he strives to inspire and advocate for positive change.

To view our Holiday E-Card Collection, please [Click Here](#).



Aiden Lee,
Abstract Painter



Wishing you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday season!

The Diversity Forum
WINS
Diversity is Strength

To help WINS continue this work please donate and/ partner with the organization at www.winscanada.com/donate

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